

Chapter 3: Rootless/Bassless Chords

In this chapter you explore one of my favorites, and most important, chord concepts you can learn when exploring comping, bassless/rootless chords.

With this concept, you take any chord shape you know, drop the lowest note, and create a new voicing from known shapes in the process.

This allows you to comp in different musical situations, and add new textures to your chords, without learning anything new.

That's a win-win in the practice room.

Have fun as you explore this concept and these chords shapes in your comping.

Chapter Goals

Here are goals related to the material in this chapter. When you can do more than half of these comfortably, you're ready to move to the next chapter.

- Learn how to create bassless chords.
- Play drop 2, drop 3, and closed position rootless/bassless chords.
- Play the creative challenge to test your bassless chord knowledge.
- Take any chord you know and remove the lowest note in this style.
- Play and bassless chord and sing the missing bass note.

Backing Tracks

Here's the info for each backing track in this chapter.

- Backing Tracks are 2516 in C, G, and D.
- Slow tracks are 60 bpm.
- Medium tracks are 90 bpm.
- Fast tracks are 120 bpm.
- Creative challenge track is 60 bpm.

Rootless Drop 2 Chords

The first set of chords you explore with rootless/bassless shapes are drop 2 voicings.

These chords are very effective when playing chord melody or chord soloing phrases, especially with the rootless/bassless versions.

Work both the full and bassless/rootless versions below in C, then take to other keys when ready.

From there, apply these smaller chord shapes to your comping over backing tracks and full jazz tunes when comfortable.

	Dm ⁷	G ⁷	Cmaj ⁷	A ⁷ (b9)
Musical Staff				
Fingering	T: 6 A: 5 B: 7 5	6 4 5 5	5 4 5 3	5 3 5 4

	Dm ⁷	G ⁷	Cmaj ⁷	A ⁷ (b9)
Musical Staff				
Fingering	T: 6 A: 5 B: 7	6 4 5	5 4 5	5 3 5

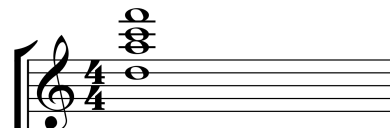
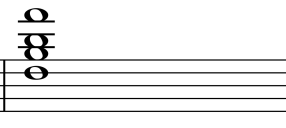
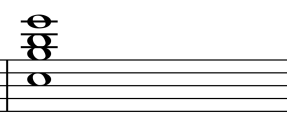
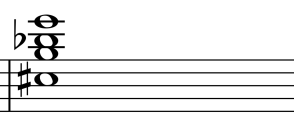
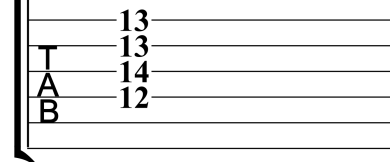
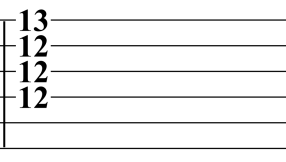
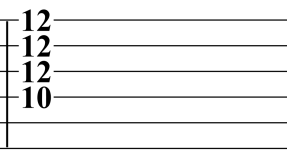
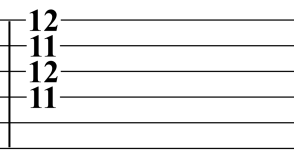
Here's a second position of drop 2 chords with the lowest note removed.

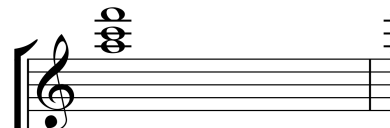
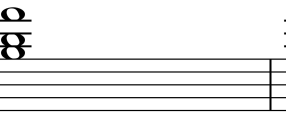
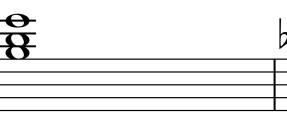
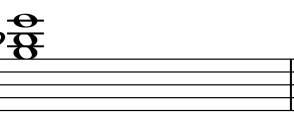
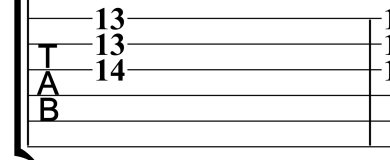



Start by playing the full version of each chord over a metronome then the backing track.

From there, work the bassless versions as you shrink the chord in your playing over a metronome and backing tracks.

Lastly, move between this position and the first one above as you apply these chords around different areas of the fretboard.

When ready, take these chords to other keys, other tempos, and to full jazz songs in your studies.

D_m7	G7	Cmaj7	A7(b9)
			
			

D_m7	G7	Cmaj7	A7(b9)
			
			

Rootless Drop 3 Chords

The next set of chords you explore with rootless/bassless shapes are drop 3 voicings, which normally have a string skip.

When you remove the lowest note from any drop 3 chord, you eliminate that string skip, making the chord easier to play while maintaining the core sound.

Work both the full and bassless/rootless versions below in C, then take to other keys when ready.

From there, apply these smaller chord shapes to your comping over backing tracks and full jazz tunes when comfortable.

	Dm ⁷	G ⁷	Cmaj ⁷	A ⁷ (b ⁹)
T	8	8	8	8
A	10	10	9	9
B	10	9	9	8
	10	10	8	9

	Dm ⁷	G ⁷	Cmaj ⁷	A ⁷ (b ⁹)
T	8	8	8	8
A	10	10	9	9
B	10	9	9	8

Here's a second position of drop 3 chords with the lowest note removed.

Start by playing the full version of each chord over a metronome then the backing track.

From there, work the bassless versions as you shrink the chord in your playing over a metronome and backing tracks.

Lastly, move between this position and the first one above as you apply these chords around different areas of the fretboard.

When ready, take these chords to other keys, other tempos, and to full jazz songs in your studies.

	Dm ⁷	G ⁷	Cmaj ⁷	A ⁷ ♭ ⁹
Treble Clef				
TAB	5 6 5 5	3 6 4 5	3 5 4 3	3 5 3 4

	Dm ⁷	G ⁷	Cmaj ⁷	A ⁷ ♭ ⁹
Treble Clef				
TAB	5 6 5 5	3 6 4 5	3 5 4 3	3 5 3 4

Rootless Closed Chords

To finish your intro to rootless chords, here are closed chords, 1357 in that order, followed by their rootless versions below.

Notice that the closed chords, the top line, is very difficult to play. This is where rootless/bassless chords are essential.

They allow you to play these cool-sounding chords, but not have to grow an extra finger to do so. More colors, less stretching.

Work on these chord shapes on your own, both versions, then over the backing track when ready.

Closed chords aren't for everyone, but with this rootless/bassless exercise, you add these shapes to your comping regardless of hand size or experience level.

	Dm ⁷	G ⁷	Cmaj ⁷	A ⁷ (b ⁹)
T	8	7	7	6
A	10	8	8	8
B	10	10	9	9
B	12	12	10	11

	Dm ⁷	G ⁷	Cmaj ⁷	A ⁷ (b ⁹)
T	8	7	7	6
A	10	8	8	8
B	10	10	9	9
B				

Creative Challenge

You're now ready to test your skill set with a creative challenge based on the concepts in this chapter.

Below you find a chord study written out over the changes to the jazz standard Summertime.

I've given you chord shapes to get started with, and you can use your own chords if you feel ready for that extra challenge.

Here are the goals for this challenge, have fun!

- Memorize the chord shapes, one at a time.
- Play 4 bar phrases when ready, from memory.
- Play the entire study, no rhythms, with a metronome then backing track.
- Remove the roots to play rootless versions of these chords.
- Add in rhythms and picking patterns to the chords over the track.
- Replace these chord shapes with your own shapes.
- Write a chord study based on the concepts in this chapter.
- Sing the top note of each chord as you comp.

Now that you know how to work this creative challenge, here comes the cool part, getting it on the fretboard.

If you want get feedback on your playing with this challenge, or any exercise in this chapter, you can post a YouTube video link in the comments below.

I'll be glad to check out your video and give you feedback on this, or any, exercise.

Dm⁷ Em⁷(b5) A⁷ALT. Dm⁷ Am⁷(b5) D⁷ALT.

T	5	5	6	5	4	6
A	5	7	6	5	5	5
B	5	5	5	3	5	4
		6	5	5	5	5

Gm⁷ Em⁷(b5) A⁷ALT.

T	3	6	5	6
A	3	7	7	6
B	3	5	5	5
	3	6	6	5

Dm⁷ Em⁷(b5) A⁷ALT. Dm⁷ Gm⁷ C⁷

T	5	5	6	5	3	3
A	5	7	6	5	3	3
B	5	5	5	3	3	3
		6	5	5	3	3

Fmaj7 Em⁷(b5) A⁷ALT. Dm⁷ Em⁷(b5) A⁷ALT.

T	5	5	6	5	5	6
A	5	7	6	5	7	6
B	8	5	5	3	5	5
		6	5	5	6	5